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Needs Assessment Report
Educational Materials for Multihandicapped Visually Impaired Students
American Printing House for the Blind

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Needs Assessment Meeting

Materials for Multihandicapped Visually Impaired Students

Overview/Introduction

The needs assessment meeting was conducted Saturday and Sunday, January 8-9, 1983 at Shakertown, Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Participants, who had also consulted the two previous days on the Light Box Level II materials, included:

Pat Carpenter, DeKalb County Schools, Georgia

Marvin Efron, Optometrist, W. Columbia, South Carolina

Kay Ferrell, American Foundation for the Blind, New York, New York

Judy Goodrich, University of Kentucky, Deaf-Blind project, Lexington, Kentucky

American Printing House personnel present included June Morris (Saturday), Sheri Moore, Sharon Bensinger, and Suzette Frere.

The arrangement of the meeting agenda was designed to develop from the general to the specific. For example, problematic curriculum areas were determined initially, which lead to specific educational materials needs. A meeting schedule can be found in Appendix A.

Recommended Materials

The consultants identified 13 needed educational materials. These materials can be grouped into four basic categories: sensory, prevocational, life skills and self-help, and leisure time/miscellaneous. Following, by topic categories, is a summary of each recommended educational material.

Sensory

1. "Peel and Feel"--adhesive backed sheets of varied colors and textures (examples: felt, plastic, sandpaper). Used for tactile discrimination exercises and personal identification.

2. Infant packet--a collection of inexpensive materials, accompanied by written suggestions for use, targeted towards parents, para-professionals, and professionals not trained in vision who interact with visually impaired infants, birth-2 years. Materials and activities should stress early sensory stimulation and development of any remaining vision. (Examples of inexpensive tangibles might include APH flash/penlights; brushes; squeeze toys; APH sound shaker, etc.)
3. Adolescent Sensory Stimulation Kit (SSK)--an adapted, "older" version of the present SSK, targeted towards low-functioning multihandicapped visually impaired students, 13-18 years old. Purpose would be to provide sensory stimulation/development materials and activities, using age-appropriate materials.

Prevocational

1. Vocational skills index adaptation--a systematic analysis of skills tested on a vocational assessment index, such as the Singer or The Valpar. This analysis should be coupled with a teacher survey of multihandicapped visually impaired students, detailing skills needed for various vocational placements. This combined information might result in an adaptation of the commonly used Singer or Valpar vocational assessments.
2. Expanded Prevocational Skills Development Materials (PSDM)--a kit of tangible materials, with accompanying written materials, expanding the current PSDM. The suggested new materials would involve the development of higher level tasks such as multi-step task completion, establishment of work habits, assembly line preparation and production, and cooperative work efforts with peers.

Life Skills and Self-Help

1. Daily Living Skills Kit--a kit, or series of kits, targeted for pre-adolescent and adolescent multihandicapped visually impaired students to develop self-help and daily living skills. The kit materials would focus on building independence in such areas as shaving, make-up application, hair care, menstruation, dressing, and coordinating clothes, etc.
2. Life skills cassette program--a series of self-programmed cassettes with written support materials, targeted for the preadolescent and adolescent multihandicapped visually impaired student. Life skills content to be addressed should include the following: greeting people, street behavior, mannerisms, table manners, shopping, getting help from others, using the telephone, personal hygiene, use of the cane, guide dog etiquette, assertiveness, consideration of others, and handling problems in the workshop/on the job.
3. Survival skills awareness and development-- a set of training materials to support the learning of various environmental signs used in daily life. The tangible materials should include signs as they appear environmentally with the addition of the accompanying braille or large type word. Signs/words for inclusion: stop sign, exit sign, fire alarm box, in/out, toilets/restrooms (women, men), danger, men at work, keep out, etc.
4. Sex education--a definite need for materials in this area was voiced. However, the needs assessment consultants did not feel knowledgeable enough to suggest materials for development. The consultants suggested that APH convene a group of professionals familiar with sex

education programs for visually impaired and multihandicapped students, and consider that group's suggestions.

Leisure Time/Miscellaneous

1. Gross motor development and recreation--several materials, accompanied by a list of games, to develop gross motor skills, cooperation, socialization, and use of leisure time. Several relatively simple and inexpensive gross motor aids would be developed or adapted. Suggestions include a ball which slides on ropes with handles on two ends, a T-ball set, or velcro bands for use in gymnastic exercises.
2. Simple games--modify or develop one or two elementary games appropriate for 3 year developmental level and up. Design the games to provide experiences in following directions, encouraging social interactions, and learning to meaningfully occupy leisure time. Simple games such as Candyland or Ten Spot might be adapted with consideration to color and texture. Games should be constructed so as to be placed on two levels: simple and complex. In a more complex version, for example, you would have to move back one space for landing on a certain colored square.
3. Electronic switches--a set of mercury switches (or similar devices) which would give a low functioning child feedback on such things as maintaining posture, body control, head righting, trunk control, etc. Ideally, the same switch could be used in a variety of situations, as those suggested above.

4. Adaptation/augmentation of APH marketing approach--the consultants strongly suggested that consideration be given to expanding our marketing efforts and accompanying product visibility to teachers of the severely handicapped. Many of the multihandicapped visually impaired students are in such classes, usually without the benefit of teachers trained in working with visually impaired children. To promote our products to teachers working with these "integrated" multihandicapped students, the consultants advised exhibiting at TASH (Teacher's Association for the Severely Handicapped) conferences and also presenting at the TASH conferences.

Development Priorities

Of the 13 recommendations detailed in the previous section, the materials were prioritized for research and development as follows:

1. "Peel and Feel"
2. Adolescent Sensory Stimulation Kit
3. Expanded Prevocational Skills Development Materials
- *4. Survival skills awareness and development
- *5. Daily living skills kit
- *6. Life skills cassette program
- *7. Infant packet
- *8. Vocational skills index adaptation

Also highly recommended was adaptation/augmentation of APH marketing approach and interagency collaboration and cooperation with American Foundation for the Blind and others.

*Recommendations 4-8 were rated within 2.5 points.